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DECADENCE OF ART IN PRESENT-DAY SPAIN

Of the great promise which seemed to lie in the art prospect of Spain a decade ago only the smallest portion has come to fulfillment.

As in the literary field, so also in art, the remarkable developments of that period proved but fleeting and transitory. Only in rare and isolated cases have the literary productions of recent years risen above the low plane of mediocrity, and in these cases they have not been from the pens of the young men of to-day, but from those of the authors who have held the leading places for a score of years. The same condition is apparent in the field of art. Only a few of the younger generation of artists have come forward with anything in any way remarkable or worthy of mention; the chiefs of the present are practically those of five and ten years ago, and the gaps which death has made in their ranks have hardly

been filled by new recruits, though the number of students at the art schools is constantly increasing. The present outlook is discouraging.

Whence comes this stagnation in the artistic life of modern Spain?

It is vain to seek its causes solely in the political conditions which have brought the country to its present unhappy state. It is undeniably true that political questions have occupied a large place in the thoughts of the nation. The same, however, could be said of the



ANDALUSIAN HORSEWOMAN
By José Reyes

time when the great rise in all fields of intellectual and industrial activity made itself manifest and seemed to justify the brightest hopes for Spain's artistic future. Nor is it altogether the desperate economic condition and the poverty of the people which must be blamed for the standstill in artistic endeavor and the paucity of production, for the number of those who could, if they would, render substantial aid to the cause is not inconsiderable. These reasons are only partial.

The chief causes of the artistic depression of modern Spain must



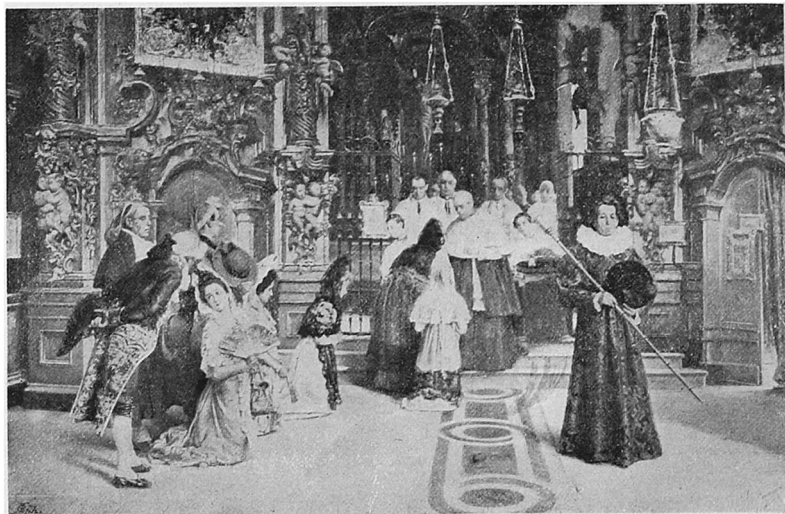
CATALONIAN FISHERFOLK

By Onofré Gari Torrent

be sought elsewhere. They lie in the complete absence of interest, and often of ability to appreciate works of art, which characterizes the wealthy and cultured classes; in the injurious effects of the bickerings between school and school, with their resultant evils of uncertainty as to æsthetic standards, and of lack of definite and universally admitted principles; in the temperament and racial peculiarities of the Southron, in whom the highest gifts of fancy and artistic talent are often stifled by the want of energy and capacity for application; and lastly, they are to be sought in the limitations of viewpoint which circumscribe the Spanish artist of to-day, who, commonly unable, through lack of means, to learn by travel and foreign study of the works of other nations, is peculiarly liable to overrate the productions of his own little circle, and to take unto himself, and to his

brethren as a class, the high praise which is occasionally and deservedly rendered to a single production, but is in no way merited by all.

The large number of works brought together at the biennial exhibitions at Madrid attests the activity and industry of the younger generation, but the careful observer looks in vain for any evidence of a new growth, or a sign of promise, and even the local critics, animated by the fairest and most charitable motives, are sorrowfully compelled to own that the number of works really worthy of notice



HIS EMINENCE

By Salvadore Viniegra y Lasso

is small indeed. Moreover, the older and experienced artists generally shun these exhibitions—as the last one clearly showed—either because they are unwilling to exhibit in such unequal company, or in the case of those living abroad, because they will not incur the heavy expense of shipping, with the almost certain knowledge that there will be no sales, or that the prices secured will be but a fraction of those easily obtainable in Paris, London, New York, Vienna, or Berlin.

In a large proportion of the exhibits the choice of subject, manner of treatment, and technical execution leave much to be desired. Even the mild local critics call attention to a fault, which is by no means confined to modern Spanish art, namely, the absolute want of intellectual interest in much of the work shown. The Spanish exhibitions are flooded with “sketches” and “studies,” often hasty and super-



STUDY HEAD
By Mariano Fortuny

ficial, which lay claim to artistic merit, but which are mere copies of simple and uninteresting objects. There are also pictures in which attempts are made to solve technical problems which are mostly far beyond the powers of the artist; impressionistic color schemes in imitation of foreign, chiefly Parisian, productions of other days; technical tricks and difficulties; strainings after unusual and striking effects; attempts to outdo the most extreme of the foreign naturalistic and im-

pressionistic schools; but nowhere sentiment, nowhere intellectual conceptions, no reflections of human feelings or soul problems—these are wanting even in creations of a professedly symbolistic character.

Technical development suffers from the everlasting conflict of the several schools and from insufficient training of the students, already full-fledged artists in their own appraisal when they have scarcely mastered the rudiments of the use of brush and palette. To such the trouble may be largely brought home, since they, in their self-sufficiency, profess to regard systematic training as a restraint upon their individual development, and casting off the guidance of preceptor and principal, are easily caught by the most outlandish of foreign fads, which they attempt to imitate.

At the same time the art schools of Spain, and particularly the educational authorities of the country, are by no means free from the reproach of incompetence in method and experience. The government administration of art education is intrusted to three officials, subject to removal by each new minister of education, or at each change of the government—an event of frequent occurrence. These officers

are politicians, whose equipment for their offices is usually of the most superficial quality, and who, in the attempt to make an impression, either proceed to formulate enactments directly contrary to the best interests of the cause intrusted to them, as was recently evidenced in the reorganization of the famous National Museum in Madrid, or—and of the two evils this is the less—adhere to the old regulations, long since outlived, and not at all suited to modern requirements.

The first duty of this body ought to be to study the conditions of the country and the needs of the times, and to observe the tendencies and trend of artistic progress, and upon the basis of their investigations so to regulate and direct educational methods as to assure the attainment of the best results. Under prevailing conditions, however, such a system is entirely out of the question, since these officials, even with the best of intentions, have not the time at their command to make such investigations or to acquire the knowledge necessary. And so the old order continues, and as competent artists scorn to identify themselves as teachers with such a régime, and as instruction is thus mostly in the hands of superannuated drawing masters and third-rate painters, the art schools remain unimproved, and one cannot blame the really talented pupil if he strives to escape from the irksome pedantry of such a system as soon as he can. Many of the greatest living Spanish artists—among them such men as the renowned Francisco de Pradilla and the youthful Ignacio Zuloaga (born 1870)—not only chose their own paths, but found it necessary to begin by overcoming much of the harm

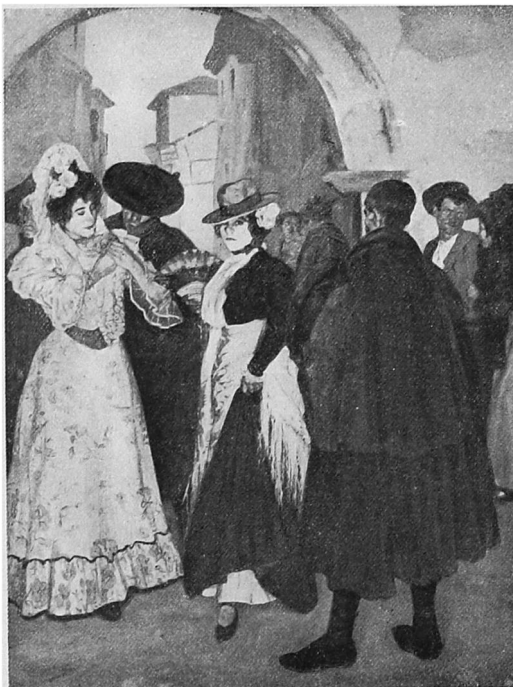


ON A VISIT
By José Millas

done them by the schools. Thus only the strong, self-reliant artists can hope to accomplish anything worthy of a moment's consideration.

In view of the unhappy conditions of the country, and of the total lack of interest in matters artistic among the educated classes, and on the other hand, of the strong national taste for externals, for decoration, and adornment in all forms, it should be the aim of the authorities to advance the cause of the industrial arts and to attract to this broad field the thousands of young men and women who are now devoting time and energy to the fruitless and hopeless pursuit of painting and sculpture. The industrial art schools of Spain carry a faculty of thirty-six professors, besides numerous assistants, but they have in late years been practically transformed into engineering schools for the education of electricians. What a wide field is thus closed to the many whose talents would lead them hither, who are now filling the galleries with poor and faulty pictures, and who, even if they attain to some measure of success, are foredoomed to a pre-

carious livelihood unless, perchance, they are so fortunate as to gain a foothold in a foreign land! And how infinitesimal is the proportion of these latter to the great number of all those who are devoting their energies to art! The exhibition of 1899 comprised four hundred and ninety-seven painters, including sixty-four women, who offered nine hundred and nine pictures, sixty-five sculptors with ninety-seven subjects, eleven architects with thirteen designs, and fifty-three art-workers with one hundred and seventy-one



THE STREET OF LOVE
By Ignacio Zuloaga

productions, a total of six hundred and thirty-six exhibitors with eleven hundred and ninety subjects; and how many more were rejected!

Upon the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando would properly devolve the task of effecting a reform in art education. But this institution is itself subject to the official board, and since its membership is largely recruited from the highest political circles, and young and energetic but obscure artists have no voice in

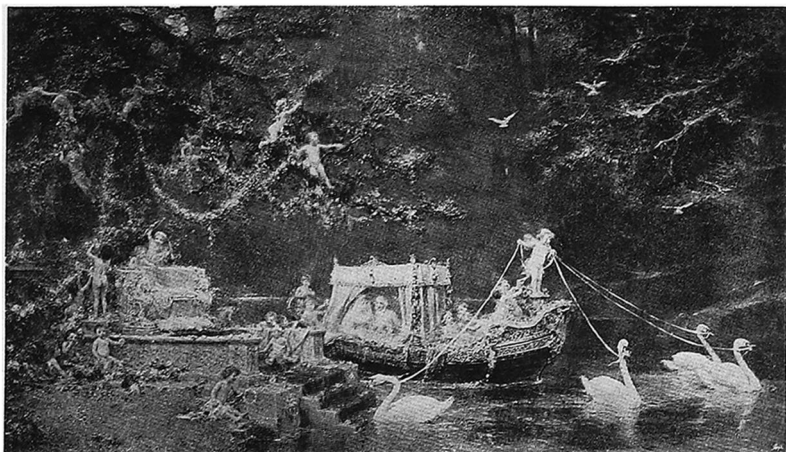


MOTHER AND CHILD
By Luis Jimenez

its councils, the necessary initiative, as well as the inclination and power to combat the incapacities of officialdom, are lacking. The Circle of Fine Arts, though it also conducts classes, is nothing more than a club, composed chiefly of fashionables, and presided over by a high official, in the choice of whom a knowledge of the fine arts is by no means a prerequisite. The Circle gives small annual exhibitions of little importance, but exercises no influence on the artistic life of the nation.

The National Exhibition of 1899 differed from its predecessors in one particular, namely, in that it included a special exhibit of one hundred and ninety works of the only great Spanish landscape-painter, Carlos Haes, who died in 1898. This exhibit was organized by Jaime Morera, the disciple and artistic heir of the master, and the entire collection has now, in pursuance of the painter's bequest, found a permanent resting-place in the Modern Art Museum.

This new museum owes its origin primarily to the collection of nineteenth-century art made by the government, for the promotion of the fine arts, which collection has been augmented by numerous



THE ISLAND OF LOVE
By José Benlliure y Gil

gifts and bequests. Presumably, therefore, it should afford a complete survey of the artistic productions of Spain during the last century. As a matter of fact, however, it is neither complete nor creditable, for the official purchases were governed much less by principles of artistic merit than by considerations of political or other powerful influence. Many an obscure artist, who could enlist the services of a champion in the board of judges or the ministry, is represented far beyond his due, while others, less fortunate—and among them some of the greatest—are either not included at all, or are represented by some of their earlier works, which are worse than useless in determining the rightful places of their authors. In this class, for instance, one finds Fortuny and Pradilla.

The National Museum of the Prado, the congestion of which was somewhat relieved by the removal of the modern collection to the Modern Art Museum, has suffered sadly through the remodeling to which it has been subjected and through the destruction of the hall of Isabella, which occurred at the time of the Velasquez celebration in 1899. Francisco de Pradilla, who succeeded Federico de Madrazos as director, after vainly protesting against the ruthless changes to which this historic structure was subjected at the orders of the powers that be, finally resigned in disgust, and has since devoted himself entirely to his own studio.

Of all the thousands of living Spanish artists, the number of those producing really meritorious work, either in painting or in sculpture, is exceedingly small. And yet even this small number, from which

our illustrations are selected, gives eloquent proof of the ability and the vitality which still inheres in the Spanish art world, and of the possibilities which, under happier conditions, might be brought to brilliant realizations.

Among modern painters of Spain the most noteworthy are Francisco de Pradilla, José Benlliure y Gil, José Jimenez y Aranda, Carbonero, Luis Jimenez, Ferrant, Martinez Cubells, Puebla, Avilés, Repullés, Salvador, Samsó y Maura, Maura y Montaner; and of the younger line, Menendez Pidal, Pinazo, Pla, Morera, Pedro Saenz, Sancha, Raurich, Meifrén, Beruete, Sorola y Ugarte, Garcia Rodriguez, Pinelo, Espina, Mir, Garnelo y Alda, Gabriel Puig Roda, Joaquin Sorolla, Onofré Gari Torrent, José Millas, Mariano Fortuny the younger, and—last but not least—Ignacio Zuloaga, the youngest star in the firmament. Some others might be included.

It is pleasant to know that the size of the canvas has ceased to be considered the criterion for the valuation of paintings, although, since neither the critics nor the public have been wholly freed from the influence of large dimensions, there are still many painters who continue to turn out pictures of a size which, while suited to stirring and crowded historical scenes, become ridiculous when employed for uninteresting landscapes or empty *genre* pictures.

Historical painting is, indeed, gradually going out of fashion while landscape and *genre* work is advancing in popularity. Portraiture



BALLET GIRLS
By Gabriel Puig-Roda

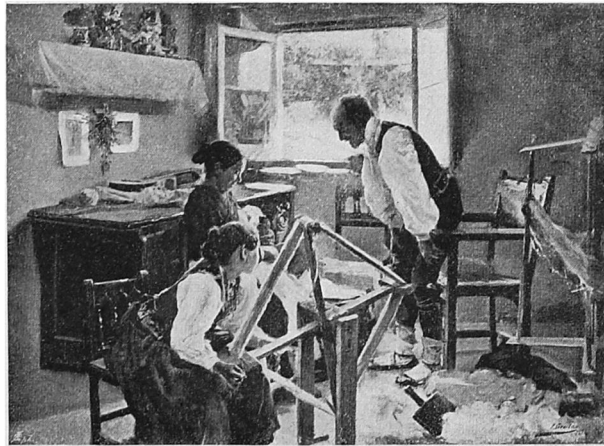
is successfully followed by many, among them several women, though these latter generally turn to flower-painting and other still-life work.

Unquestionably the chief among the sculptors is Mariano Benlliure, at whose side stand Agustin Querol and Aniceto Marinas, whose statue of Velasquez was unveiled at the Velasquez celebration in 1899. After these come Llimona y Bruguera, José Reynes, Mateo Inurria, Monserrat y Portela, Campoy, Castaños, Alsina, Martin Menendez, Cabrera, and many others.

The troublous times which have fallen upon Spain are not conducive to the cultivation of the fine arts. Yet if the buffetings of fate should bring with them the complete reorganization of the administrative machinery of the government of Alfonso XIII., and the abatement of some of its notorious evils, such reforms would soon make themselves felt in the art life of the nation, imparting to it new life and inspiration.*

GUSTAV DIERCKS.

*For further examples of Spanish Art, see following pages.



AN INTERIOR
By Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida

of his insistence upon the pre-eminence of the decorative. I say "in spite of," because, although the two qualities should not be incompatible, the majority of painters who emphasize the decorative tend to disregard the element of sentiment. Few painters have felt so finely with the brush the movement, ripple, and reflection in water. He was especially fond of white in sunlight and left many impressions of white houses among green trees, mist-like, dream-like, the emotion



THE CHRISTENING
By José Jimenez y Aranda

of the effect, never the exact reproduction of it. He himself received strong impressions, and these he sought ever to record on canvas.

His own house, designed by himself—one might better say composed by himself—to fit the hillside upon which it stood, was one of his favorite motives; he has left studies of it in many aspects—imprisoned summer memories of white pillars cross-barred with sunlight, patterned with leaf shadows, of warm light and cool shade over the grass. His interpretation of snow effects was particularly sympathetic. In this posthumous exhibition there was one canvas with a foreground of piazza and the irregular lines of a frozen vine, snow-touched, that was as indefinable yet deep in its appeal as a Chopin nocturne or a Paul Verlaine verse, a picture one could never forget.

Another small canvas of green downs and a sandy road was of

peculiar interest. Every painter knows the difficulty—impossibility, almost—of making a harmonious arrangement of outdoor blue and green in full sunlight. Certain effects of fresh green, very beautiful in nature, are undesirable as painting material. In the canvas in question the effect was rich, harmonious, and truthful—truthful as an impression of the effect, the spirit of the scene not the letter—and it may well be argued from the standpoints of other arts than the painter's



THE HOLY FRANCISCUS OF ASSISI

By José Gurneo y Alda

that it is invariably the spirit not the letter that is truth. A second look at this canvas would reveal the fact that the sky was green also—the technical cause of the resultant harmony—a performance sure to meet with unfavorable criticism from those of different artistic convictions.

It is an accepted principle in art, however, that it is the manner of doing that is the thing—as Berlioz said, regarding the judgment of musical composition, “Whatever produces a good effect is good, and whatever produces a bad effect is bad.” Beyond the point that sets the accepted standard, these things become a matter of individual appeal. Nothing more expressive of Mr. Twachtman's art attitude than this little canvas could be imagined. It is a pictorial lecture.

Mr. Twachtman's professional standing among his associates, and

the Tuscan mother with her children. But the work is not entirely naturalistic. Bartolini did not think modern dress could be reproduced in sculpture and the hair is still classical. The Rape of Polyxena, by Professor Fedi, is a work of great merit. In Giovanni Dupre classicism and naturalism meet. For his Abel he took the most beautiful form he could find and added his own personality to the work by suggesting the compassion of the dying Abel for his slayer.

The Dying Hours of Napoleon, by Vincenzo Vela, now at Versailles, shows the emperor still rebellious. The map of Europe is



ST. FRANCIS
By Augustin Querol

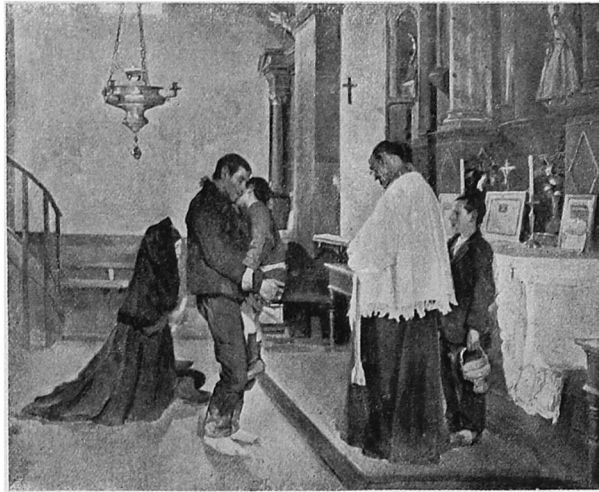
stretched out before him and his clenched fist rests upon Germany and Russia. His mind is full of images. Giulio Monteverde, too poor to hire models, employed the members of his family. Jenner vaccinating his child is one of his best known works. Emilio Zocchi made himself popularly famous by his figure of the lad Michelangelo carving the head of the satyr. In Venice the sculptor of most note is Antonio del Zotto, a fine technician. He carved a statue of Titian and it stands outside the great painter's studio. A statue of Goldoni, playwright and actor, in bronze, located in a square near the Rialto Bridge, is worthy of a voyage of discovery.

Modern Italian painting began with classicism; this was followed by a reaction which took two directions, one path leading to Pre-Raphaelitism, the other to romanticism. Apropos of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, it may be recalled that Ford Madox Brown, traveling

of some Franciscan monks in Holland. It is the work of Caesare Fracassini. Giulio Sartorio may be called a Pre-Raphaelite. Ciseri's Entombment of Christ is the work of one of the older painters who had new ideas. Telemaco Signorini is a versatile impressionist, representing the culture of London and Paris, as well as that of his own Italy.

Giovanni Muzziola has something of the fondness of Alma Tadema for marbles and rich stuffs. Lemmo Rossi-Scotti paints idylls; Giovanni Segantini is the Italian parallel of the French Millet, and the Israels of Holland; his Ploughing in the Engadine is his best known work. Peruzzi's Madonnina, a girl with a sleeping child, is known to many through reproductions. The greatest Genoese painter is Niccolo Barabino; his panels will live; the finest example is the Madonna of the Olives, owned by Queen Margherita.

ELIZABETH DENIO.



SALUS INFIRMORUM
By Luis Menendez Pidal